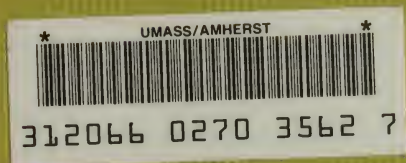


MASS. MCL 1.2: ST82



massachusetts cultural council

2000-2005
strategic plan

Introduction & Overview

The Massachusetts Cultural Council is pleased to announce the completion of a new five-year plan for the years 2000 and beyond. More than 2,000 of our constituents have helped us shape this plan, through a 15-month process that included a series of public forums, surveys, planning retreats, program evaluations, focus groups and individual conversations. We are deeply indebted to all of the individuals and organizations that helped us develop this document.

WHERE WE'VE COME FROM

The Massachusetts Cultural Council has reconfigured its programs and rebuilt its budget over the last five years. With support from the state Legislature, we have significantly increased our investments in each of our core grant programs – for cultural organizations, schools, local cultural councils and artists.

We have also launched or expanded a series of new initiatives specifically designed to promote the role that the arts, sciences and humanities can play in building stronger, healthier communities – such as YouthReach, the Education Partnership Initiative, Science in the Community and the Cultural Economic Development Program. In the process, we have begun to create a place for culture at the table in statewide discussions on the economy, education, youth development, elder care, human services and the environment.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

Our new plan calls for an increasingly collaborative, productive and visible Council. Over the next five years we will focus on the development of new and nontraditional funding partners, through collaborations with other public agencies, foundations, corporations and individuals – though we will be careful not to compete with the fundraising efforts of our own constituents. We will maximize the impact of our dollars through an aggressive

program of direct services for artists, cultural organizations, local cultural councils and schools. We will make proactive use of new technologies, to improve efficiency, expand our reach and improve our visibility. And we will make a concerted effort to raise public awareness of the role that culture can play in building communities. All of these themes are woven deliberately through our new plan.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEW PLAN

Legislative Agenda

- Work for continued increases in the Council's annual state appropriation.
- Aggressively promote new state investment in cultural facilities.
- Maintain a significant place for the arts in the core curriculum in the renewal of statewide education reform legislation.
- Promote legislation to make charitable contributions deductible on state income taxes.

Communities

- Provide grants to 335 local cultural councils serving all 351 cities and towns in the state – the largest grassroots program of its kind in the United States.
- Deliver a wide array of services and capacity-building programs to promote the effectiveness of local cultural councils – and the 2,600 volunteers who make the program work.
- Work for increases in state, municipal and private giving for local cultural councils, using state funds to leverage increases in local funding.
- Work for 100 percent implementation of streamlining program for local cultural councils, to reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency for both councils and their grant applicants.
- Promote culture as an economic development tool through grants, partnerships and model projects.

- Launch a Community Foundation Challenge Program – to challenge community foundations to raise new dollars for programs that use the arts, sciences and humanities to build stronger communities.
- Launch a Folk Arts Initiative – to ensure that the state's folk and traditional arts resources are actively supported and valued.

Cultural Organizations

- Expand and refine the Organizational Support Program – supporting more than 500 cultural organizations with track records of excellence and community service.
- Launch a cultural facility grant program – to provide funds for the maintenance, expansion or construction of new cultural facilities and leverage additional resources from the private sector.
- Increase the effectiveness and impact of not-for-profit cultural organizations through direct services, partnerships and capacity-building grant programs.

Education and Youth Development

- Aggressively pursue education reform efforts at both the state and local levels; work to ensure a place for the arts in the curriculum, as a matter of both policy and practice.
- Actively recruit new, nontraditional funding partners to support the continued expansion of out-of-school programs such as YouthReach and Science in the Community.
- Significantly increase the number of schools participating in artist residency programs.
- Expand the reach and impact of the Education Partnership Initiative to support long-term partnerships between school districts and cultural organizations.
- Develop strategies to expand the reach of our education programs into early childhood education programs or settings.

Artists

- Increase financial resources allocated to direct grant programs for artists.
- Take a strong leadership position in the area of artist services, particularly on the topics of health care and artists live-work space.
- Develop new ways to promote markets for the work and services of Massachusetts artists, through the Council's own initiatives and through partnerships with others.

Visibility

- Launch statewide public relations campaign(s) on the role that culture plays in building communities and improving our quality of life.

Major Findings from the Planning Process

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

- The Massachusetts Cultural Council's appropriation has grown, but the economic future cannot be taken for granted. Buoyed by the strong Massachusetts economy, the Council's state appropriation has grown from \$3.6 million in FY92 to \$18.3 million in FY2000. In turn, the MCC now leverages nearly \$30 million per year in matching grants from the private sector. The strong economy has also created opportunities to increase capital funds for cultural facilities: the Council has taken a leadership role in introducing a \$35 million cultural facilities bill, which would provide grants for not-for-profit cultural organizations dealing with deferred maintenance needs. The state's economic future is unclear however, and the agency must look carefully at its future planning with regard to financial and human resources.
- Education reform remains a top priority – but there is a long way to go. The arts have been included in the state's core curriculum since 1993, and an arts framework was finally approved in June 1999. However, the arts are still peripheral in too many schools. The state's Education Reform Act is up for re-authorization in 2000; we must work to ensure a prominent place for the arts in this legislation and in future reform efforts.

OBSERVATIONS ON MCC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS: The Council's Organizational Support Program is hugely appreciated. The program provides three-year operating grants to more than 500 of the state's 3,000 not-for-profit cultural organizations; very few funders offer core support of this kind. YouthReach, Science in the Community and the Cultural Economic Development Program have each spawned remarkable success stories

and they are also beginning to attract significant interest from other grantmakers and agencies that have not traditionally supported the arts and culture. The Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Project has helped many organizations dealing with complex facility plans and financing needs; there is considerable interest in seeing the program expand to offer capital grants as well as planning grants and loans. Organizations continue to grapple with the issue of stabilization and the need for endowments and other dollars to strengthen their balance sheets.

- **LOCAL CULTURAL COUNCILS:** The large network of volunteers who serve on local cultural councils showed enormous support for the new LCC streamlining program. The Local Cultural Council Program is effective in reaching communities that would not be served otherwise, but many LCCs report that applications far outstrip their community's allocation. The Local Cultural Council Matching Incentive Program has been very effective for some councils, but only 10-12 percent of local councils participate in the program in any given year. LCCs would like the MCC's assistance in strengthening their connections with municipalities.
- **SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS:** There is a widespread concern that poor results on recent student assessments will lead to a back-to-basics movement by parents and schools. Educators and artists talked about the importance of programs like Event & Residency – which places artists in classrooms – but there is a desire to see this program reach many more schools in the state. There were also suggestions that the Council consider extending its education efforts to early childhood populations. The Education Partnership Initiative has had excellent results in some districts, but the Council's dollars are limited; the long-term success of this program will depend on in-depth investments by school districts.

- **ARTISTS:** Artists appreciate the Artist Grants Program, both for the financial award and for the recognition of their work. However the program is highly competitive and reaches a small percentage of the artist population. Technical assistance and services can reach more people. Artists are especially interested in the issues of affordable live-work space and health care. The Council can also play an important role in building markets for the work and services of Massachusetts artists, through direct programs and through partnerships.
- **TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:** All of the Council's technical assistance efforts are well received; new technologies will create new opportunities to extend the impact of our programs and services. The Council's web site, launched in January 1999, was enthusiastically welcomed (www.massculturalcouncil.org). There is interest in MCC listservs for organizations, local cultural councils and artists. Electronic grant systems have enormous potential to improve efficiency for Council grant applicants and staff alike.

The plan that follows articulates a new agency vision statement, seven overarching agency goals and 14 program objectives, each supported with a series of specific strategies.

The program objectives are clustered roughly according to themes and constituencies served; the order of the objectives in the document does not reflect an order of priority. We intend to move assertively in each area we have identified over the five-year period of the plan.

For staff and board purposes, we have also developed a series of detailed action steps that connect to each strategy. These will form the basis for annual work plans and priority-setting in each program area for each of the coming years.

Mission, Vision & Agency Goals

MISSION

The mission of the Massachusetts Cultural Council is to promote excellence, access, education and diversity in the arts, humanities and interpretive sciences, in order to improve the quality of life for all Massachusetts residents and contribute to the economic vitality of our communities.

VISION

The Massachusetts Cultural Council believes that the arts, sciences and humanities have the power to build healthier, more livable, more vital communities. They enrich, exalt and provoke. They are an essential part of a strong educational system. They contribute enormously to our economy. They build bridges across cultures. They can be used to address – or better yet, prevent – some of our most stubborn social problems. They help us interpret our past and shape our future. They help us understand what it means to be human.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council is committed to building a central place for the arts, sciences and humanities in the everyday lives of communities across the Commonwealth. The Council pursues this mission through a combination of grant programs, partnerships and services for not-for-profit cultural organizations, schools, communities and individual artists.

AGENCY GOALS

1. Expand the pool of financial and human resources – public and private – available for the arts, sciences and humanities across the Commonwealth.
2. Increase public awareness of the essential role that artists and cultural organizations play in enhancing our quality of life.
3. Support and encourage the development of working artists – the individuals at the core of our cultural community.
4. Support efforts by communities and municipalities to make the arts, sciences and humanities part of everyday life in every Massachusetts city and town.
5. Support policies and programs that use the arts, sciences and humanities to promote the education and development of our young people – both in-school and out-of-school.
6. Promote the health and stability of not-for-profit cultural organizations with track records of excellence and community service.
7. Act as a catalyst and convener to bring together the broadest possible coalition of investors and advocates – public, private and philanthropic – for the arts, sciences and humanities in our communities.

Objective 1

Maximize Massachusetts Cultural Council funding, to increase grants and services to not-for-profit cultural organizations, local cultural councils, schools and artists.

STRATEGIES

- Work for continued increases in the Council's annual state appropriation.
- Pursue additional state funds for cultural facilities.
- Discourage earmarks for individual organizations in MCC legislative appropriations.
- Maximize Council fundraising efforts from the National Endowment for the Arts.
- Pursue other fundraising opportunities as appropriate (e.g., grants from national foundations, other state agencies or corporations), provided that they do not compete with the fundraising efforts of our own constituents.
- Support the development of the Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Sciences and Humanities, the Massachusetts Alliance for Arts Education and other coalitions of advocates for the arts, sciences and humanities.

Objective 2

Promote legislation, policies and partnerships that inspire other grantmakers, agencies and individuals to increase their own support for the arts, sciences and humanities in the state.

STRATEGIES

- Aggressively seek co-funding opportunities and partnerships with other state agencies, foundations and service providers – especially those that have not traditionally funded cultural activities.
- Work with other state agencies to identify new and non-traditional sources of federal support for activities that use culture to build stronger communities.
- Increase visibility among other funders of MCC programs such as YouthReach, Education Partnership Initiative, Science in the Community and Cultural Economic Development, to break down old notions that cultural programs are peripheral to the health of our communities and the development of our young people.
- Support legislation to make charitable contributions tax deductible in Massachusetts.
- Raise funds to launch a challenge grant program for state community foundations, to encourage them to raise private dollars to support the arts, humanities and sciences.
- Provide information and services to help our own grant recipients develop new and innovative earned and contributed income strategies.
- Establish staff and board Resource Development and Marketing Committees.

Objective 3

Increase public recognition of the importance of the arts, sciences and humanities in the life of the Commonwealth, and of the Massachusetts Cultural Council's role as a catalyst for the support and promotion of high-quality cultural programs.

STRATEGIES

- Launch public campaign(s) to promote public awareness of the role that culture can play in building stronger communities and better schools.
- Engage the media to tell the success stories stemming from public support for the arts, sciences and humanities.
- Reach out to corporate, philanthropic and opinion leaders through appropriate forums and special events, such as the Commonwealth Awards, legislative and business breakfasts and special programs designed to highlight Massachusetts Cultural Council successes.
- Work with editors and publishers to achieve positive editorials on the impact of the arts, sciences and humanities in our communities; write and distribute op-ed pieces to carry the message directly to the public.
- Develop a media training program to help local cultural councils, artists, schools and organizations better tell their own stories, both to the media and to their own stakeholders (municipal officials, local opinion leaders and the general public).
- Promote public awareness of the economic contributions of the cultural industry, through research and policy initiatives such as Creative Economy 2000, a partnership with the New England Council and the New England Foundation for the Arts.

Objective 4

Support Massachusetts artists through direct grants, technical assistance, professional development and service programs.

STRATEGIES

- Expand the Artist Grants Program, to provide direct grants to Massachusetts artists in recognition of exceptional work.
- Support the continuing education of working artists by providing Professional Development grants for conferences, seminars, residencies or master classes.
- Initiate partnerships and programs to provide technical assistance, services and information to artists on issues such as access to health insurance, live-work space and other topics.
- Provide in-depth training programs for artists and service providers to help them develop skills for working interactively with new populations (e.g. The Elder Arts Initiative).

Objective 5

Help create and expand markets for the work and services of Massachusetts artists.

STRATEGIES

- Develop programs and partnerships to increase the visibility of Massachusetts artists.
- Promote exhibitions, performances and readings by Massachusetts artists.
- Develop initiatives such as the new Massport Cultural Tourism position (a collaborative effort between the MCC and the other New England state arts agencies) to help artists promote their work to new audiences.
- Consider re-introducing legislation to set aside a portion of funds for any public construction project for public art or other projects that engage artists in communities where such facilities are being built.
- Support high-quality public performances by Massachusetts performing artists – particularly in rural and underserved communities – through the Massachusetts Touring Program and other mechanisms. Evaluate and refine the Massachusetts Touring Program to ensure that it is serving the broadest range of communities and artists as possible.
- Through the Elder Arts Initiative, encourage elder care facilities to create a place for artists within the system of healthcare and assume more responsibility for paying for it.

Objective 6

Support, preserve and promote appreciation of the diverse cultural traditions of the state's ethnic, immigrant and long-settled populations.

STRATEGIES

- Conduct a detailed survey of the folk and traditional arts that are rooted within the state's ethnic, immigrant and long-settled communities; create an archive of the data.
- Promote the integration of folk and traditional arts into existing MCC programs (e.g., Event & Residency, Cultural Economic Development, Artist Grants and Local Cultural Councils); publicize these opportunities and provide assistance to help traditional artists avail themselves of these opportunities.
- Consider developing a traditional arts apprenticeship program that would support master folk artists in passing on skills, knowledge and aesthetics to qualified apprentices.
- Increase understanding and appreciation of the state's folk and traditional arts – outside the immediate communities that sustain them – through projects such as broadcasts, exhibitions, World Wide Web exhibits or cultural tours.
- Create partnerships and relationships to ensure that the traditional arts in Massachusetts are broadly supported.

Objective 7

Invest in and build the capacity of local cultural councils in order to increase their support of public programming in the arts, sciences and humanities in Massachusetts cities and towns.

STRATEGIES

- Work closely with local cultural councils to make the case for an increased state appropriation to the Massachusetts Cultural Council in order to increase the pool of funds available to LCCs.
- Collaborate with the Massachusetts Municipal Association to strengthen the involvement of municipal officials in LCC activities and operations.
- Challenge municipalities to become more involved and invest more in local programs in the arts, sciences and humanities through the Matching Incentive Program or other appropriate mechanisms.
- Increase the engagement of individuals, local organizations and businesses supporting cultural activity at the community level.
- Work toward full implementation of a streamlined system of administration for the Local Cultural Council Grant Program to eliminate levels of bureaucracy and focus MCC attention on local council operations rather than on individual grants.
- Offer a wide array of high-quality technical assistance programs and services to support, educate and motivate volunteer local council members; promote best practices; and spotlight model LCC projects.
- Strengthen the largest local cultural councils (those receiving more than \$20,000 from the MCC each year) by helping them professionalize their operations.

Objective 8

Promote statewide education reform legislation and other policies that encourage schools, districts and communities to make in-depth commitments to arts education.

STRATEGIES

- Ensure that the arts remain part of the state's core curriculum and have a rigorous curriculum framework with high learning standards.
- Research and develop arts education assessment models and assist schools and districts in implementing the most appropriate and relevant models.
- Promote the inclusion of arts education criteria in the state's evaluation system for schools and districts.
- Maintain a close, in-depth partnership with the state Department of Education, to ensure the continued development of policies that build a central place for the arts in our schools, and to maximize the impact of our joint investments in our schools.
- Work closely with the Massachusetts Alliance for Arts Education, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and others to build a strong alliance in support of arts education policies and programs.
- Promote local buy-in on arts education from superintendents, principals and other top-level administrators; promote local adoption of graduation requirements in the arts; promote commitments to appropriate staffing levels and financial resources for arts education in each district.
- Promote the inclusion of training in the arts in teacher preparation and principal/superintendent leadership programs.

Objective 9

Extend the impact of grant programs and other activities that encourage partnerships among schools, cultural organizations and artists.

STRATEGIES

- Publicize models of how artists and cultural organizations can help schools address their educational goals and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
- Provide technical assistance for artists and cultural organizations in how to link their programs to the state curriculum frameworks.
- Strengthen the Education Partnership Initiative to support effective, long-term partnerships between cultural organizations and school districts; recruit new and non-traditional funding partners.
- Encourage investments in Education Partnership projects by schools, so that partnerships become a permanent part of those schools; promote the viability of partnerships as effective tools for school change.
- Increase the number of students and teachers who have the opportunity to work with professional artists through the Event & Residency Program. Conduct an in-depth evaluation of this program and examine alternative program designs.
- Increase participation by young people in high quality cultural field trips through the local cultural council-administered PASS Program.
- Expand the cultural and geographic diversity of the pool of artists and organizations on the PASS and Event & Residency rosters.
- Investigate opportunities to expand Council education programs to early childhood and pre-school populations.
- Help schools connect to cultural resources at colleges and universities.

Objective 10

Facilitate the growth of innovative, in-depth, out-of-school programs in the arts, sciences and humanities for some of our state's most vulnerable young people.

STRATEGIES

- Provide multi-year funding to highly effective YouthReach and Science in the Community projects working in a broad range of disciplines across the state.
- Maintain an environment of continuous improvement within the YouthReach and Science in the Community networks through a rigorous panel review process, ongoing MCC staff interaction and shared problem-solving across funded projects.
- Increase visibility of YouthReach, Science in the Community and their funded projects in order to promote the viability of rigorous arts and science programs as highly effective youth development tools.
- Recruit significant funding partners for YouthReach and Science in the Community.
- Advocate on behalf of grantees to private and public funders, particularly those not specifically investing in the arts and culture, for an expanded pool of resources to support YouthReach and Science in the Community projects.
- Continue to strengthen and document the success of YouthReach and Science in the Community through rigorous, on-going evaluation.
- Examine other models of programs that promote science literacy among a broader audience.

Objective 11

Provide operating support grants and technical assistance services to support the missions of not-for-profit cultural organizations and to stimulate a broad range of public programs in the arts, humanities and sciences.

STRATEGIES

- Support cultural organizations – from the state’s largest institutions to small community-based organizations – that demonstrate quality programming and services through the multi-year Organizational Support Program.
- Ensure an equitable, fair and efficient process for the review of Organizational Support applications and the distribution of Organizational Support grants.
- Conduct thorough assessments of applicant organizations and their programs through site evaluations, interviews and panel reviews.
- Develop programs and partnerships to deliver technical assistance to cultural organizations.
- Strengthen the Organizational Support Program through a formal evaluation, in order to build on the program’s track record of success.
- Use technology to expand the use of information gathered through the Organizational Support application process to benefit the cultural community: identify trends, growth patterns, resource distribution, audiences, etc.

Objective 12

Promote the quantity and quality of cultural economic development work undertaken in the Commonwealth.

STRATEGIES

- Provide seed funding for cultural activities that promote the economic revitalization of neighborhoods and communities, develop the business capacities of individual artists and cultural enterprises or develop markets for Massachusetts culture.
- Provide technical assistance and services to recipients of cultural economic development grants, to increase their effectiveness and impact.
- Initiate and maintain partnerships with other state agencies, funders and organizations with an interest in economic development, to leverage resources and encourage development of policies and programs that support cultural economic development.
- Promote research and public discourse to broaden the understanding and practice of cultural economic development.
- Publicize the Cultural Economic Development Program's pioneering work in this field.

Objective 13

Help not-for-profit cultural organizations think strategically about their capital needs and priorities; build endowments and other balance sheet assets; and plan, finance and maintain their facilities.

STRATEGIES

- Through the Endowment Grant Program, provide one-on-one technical assistance to help not-for-profit cultural organizations identify financial priorities and consider alternative strategies for capitalizing and stabilizing their organizations.
- Provide a limited number of endowment challenge grants for organizations that can demonstrate how an endowment will best advance their overall mission, in the context of their other financial needs and priorities.
- Through the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Project, provide workshops, one-on-one advisory services, pre-development planning grants and low-interest loans to not-for-profit cultural organizations.
- Establish a new capital grant program for cultural facilities, building on the foundation established by existing Facilities Project programs and services.
- Document and raise awareness among other funding partners of the bricks-and-mortar needs of not-for-profit cultural organizations.
- Investigate the development of additional financial and technical assistance services to help organizations finance and maintain their facilities, strengthen their balance sheets and think strategically about capitalization.

Objective 14

Cultivate partnerships and collaborations that pool the financial and human resources of other organizations with those of the MCC, to extend the MCC's impact and address issues beyond the scope of MCC direct grant programs.

STRATEGIES

- Work closely with the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities to support high-quality public programs in the humanities; develop complementary plans and programs through joint long-range planning; work together to maximize the pool of funds available for the humanities in Massachusetts from both the public and private sectors.
- Continue partnership with VSA arts of Massachusetts on the Americans with Disabilities Mini-Grant Program to help organizations make their programs accessible to people with disabilities.
- Collaborate with the New England Foundation for the Arts to bring larger audiences and greater resources to Massachusetts artists and cultural organizations through programs such as the Massachusetts Touring Program, the New England States Touring Program and others.
- Help the Massachusetts Alliance for Arts Education become a strong, stable organization that can provide a unified voice for arts education and establish links among the MCC and arts educators and advocates.
- Partner with the Boston Film/Video Foundation on the administration of the Artist Grants Program in the disciplines of film and video.
- Be as entrepreneurial and proactive as possible in identifying and developing future partnerships, collaborations and co-funding relationships.

This document is available at www.massculturalcouncil.org/news/plan.html

The Massachusetts Cultural Council was formed in 1990 from the merger of two state agencies: the Massachusetts Arts Lottery Council and the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. The agency is funded primarily by legislative appropriation and also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS



